

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 1, 5-8, 35, and 36 without prejudice or disclaimer, amend Claims 9, 10, 12-15, 17-19, and 24, and add new Claims 38-49 as follows:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Canceled)
4. (Canceled)
5. (Canceled)
6. (Canceled)
7. (Canceled)
8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) An off-road vehicle comprising a frame, a plurality of wheels including at least one rear wheel supporting the frame, and a prime mover powering the wheels and positioned in front of the at least one rear wheel, the frame comprising a plurality of frame members, the frame members comprising first and second groups, the first and second groups each defining rear portions that are positioned behind the [[engine]]prime mover and extend in a longitudinal direction of the vehicle, the rear portions of the first group being at least partially vertically offset above the rear portions of the second group when viewed from a lateral view, the rear portions of the first group being spaced apart from each other wider than the rear portions of the second group, the first group comprising front portions extending along lateral sides of the prime mover, the front portions being spaced apart from each other at a first width in a lateral direction, the rear portions of the first group being spaced apart from each other at a second width in the lateral direction, the first width being larger than the second width, wherein the vehicle further comprises an exhaust system, at least a portion of the exhaust system being positioned between the frame members of the second group.

10. (Currently Amended) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the frame members comprise a third [[and fourth]]group[[s]], the third and [[fourth]]second groups being offset fore to aft relative to each other and overlapping with each other in a rear section of the third group and in a front section of the [[fourth]]second group, the rear section of the third group defining a first portion coupled with the [[fourth]]second group, and the front section of

the [[fourth]]second group defining a second portion coupled with the third group, and wherein one of the rear section of the third group or the front section of the [[fourth]]second group extends farther from a longitudinal axis of the frame extending fore to aft than the other one of the rear section of the third group or the front section of the [[fourth]]second group.

11. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the wheels include a pair of front wheels, a front section of the third group at least in part being interposed between the front wheels, the front wheels being coupled with the front section of the third group.

12. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 11, wherein the front section of the third group is narrower than the rear section of the third group or the front section of the [[fourth]]second group.

13. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 11, wherein the wheels include a pair of rear wheels, a rear section of the [[fourth]]second group at least in part being interposed between the rear wheels, the rear wheels being coupled with the rear section of the [[fourth]]second group.

14. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the rear section of the [[fourth]]second group is narrower than the rear section of the third group or the front section of the [[fourth]]second group.

15. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the third and [[fourth]]second groups are arranged generally symmetrically relative to the longitudinal axis.

16. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the wheels include a pair of front wheels, a front section of the third group at least in part being interposed between the front wheels, the front wheels being coupled with the front section.

17. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the wheels include a pair of rear wheels, a rear section of the [[fourth]]second group at least in part is interposed between the rear wheels, the rear wheels are coupled with the rear section.

18. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 17, wherein the rear section of the [[fourth]]second group is narrower than the rear section of the third group or the front section of the [[fourth]]second group.

19. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the rear section of the third group includes a front member and the front section of the [[fourth]]second group includes a rear member, the first portion of the rear section being a rear end of the front member, the second portion of the front section being a forward end of the rear member, the rear end of the front member being coupled to the rear member and the forward end of the rear member being coupled to the front member with the front member being spaced apart from the rear member.

20. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 19, wherein the rear end of the front member is bent outwardly toward the rear member and the forward end of the rear member is bent inwardly toward the front member.

21. **(Original)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the frame members are tubular or U-shaped in section.

22. **(Original)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the frame members are rectangular in section.

23. **(Original)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 22, wherein the frame members have vertical and horizontal surfaces, the vertical surface being longer than the horizontal surface.

24. **(Currently Amended)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 10, wherein the third group supports a front portion of the prime mover, and the [[fourth]]second group supports a rear portion of the prime mover.

25. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the third frame portion extends along a rear side of the prime mover.

26. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the detachably affixed frame portion is detachably affixed to at least one of the first and second frame portions.

27. **(Canceled)**

28. **(Canceled)**

29. **(Previously Presented)** The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, further comprising left and right pairs of support members, the left pair of support members extending between the rear portions of the first and second groups of frame members on a left side of the

frame, the right pair of support members extending between the rear portions of the first and second groups of frame members on a right side of the frame.

30. (**Previously Presented**) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 29, wherein the left and right pairs of support members are inclined relative to a vertical plane.

31. (**Previously Presented**) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 30, further comprising left and right sets of upper and lower suspension arms, wherein the lower suspension arm of each set is longer than the upper suspension arm of the respective set.

32. (**Previously Presented**) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the rear portions of the first group are disposed at least partially above the rear portions of the second group.

33. (**Previously Presented**) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the rear portions of the first group are each spaced apart from a longitudinal centerline, and the rear portions of the second group are each spaced apart from the longitudinal centerline, each of the rear portions of the first group being spaced further from the longitudinal centerline than each of the rear portions of the second group.

34. (**Previously Presented**) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 33, wherein the rear portions of the first group are spaced equidistant from a longitudinal centerline relative to each other, and the rear portions of the second group are spaced equidistant from the longitudinal centerline relative to each other.

35. (**Canceled**)

36. (**Canceled**)

37. (**Previously Presented**) An off-road vehicle comprising a frame, a plurality of wheels supporting the frame, and a prime mover powering the wheels, the frame comprising a plurality of frame members, the frame members being divided into first and second groups, the first and second groups being offset fore to aft relative to each other and overlapping with each other in a rear section of the first group and in a front section of the second group, the rear section of the first group defining a first portion coupled with the second group, and the front section of the second group defining a second portion coupled with the first group, wherein the rear section of the first group includes a front member and the front section of the second group includes a rear member, the first portion of the rear section being a rear end of the front member,

the second portion of the front section being a forward end of the rear member, wherein the rear end of the front member is bent outwardly toward the rear member and the forward end of the rear member is bent inwardly toward the front member.

38. (New) An off-road vehicle comprising:

a plurality of wheels including at least one front wheel and at least one rear wheel;

a frame supported by the plurality of wheels, the frame comprising at least a left side frame assembly extending in a front to rear direction along a left side of the vehicle, a right side frame assembly extending along the front to rear direction along a right side of the vehicle, a first cross frame member connecting the left and right side frame assemblies;

at least left and right seats supported by the frame;

at least one prime mover disposed between the left and right seats, above the first cross frame member, and mounted to the frame such that the left and right frame assemblies extend along left and right sides of the prime mover, the prime mover configured to drive at least one of the plurality of wheels;

wherein the frame further comprises a removable cross frame member including a left side connection device disposed at a left end of the removable cross frame member and a right side connection device disposed at a right end of the removable cross frame member, the left and right side connection devices being configured to be removably secured to the left and right frame assemblies, respectively, the removable cross frame member extending along an upper end of the prime mover and providing additional strength to the frame when the left and right side connection devices are secured to the left and right side frame assemblies, respectively.

39. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38, wherein the removable cross frame member extends directly over a portion of the prime mover when the left and right connection devices are secured to the left and right frame assemblies, respectively.

40. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 39, wherein the first cross frame member extends directly below the prime mover.

41. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38, wherein the first cross frame member extends directly below the prime mover.

42. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38, wherein the left and right side connection devices comprise left and right brackets, respectively, the removable cross frame member being secured to the left and right brackets with bolts.

43. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38 additionally comprising a load container connected to at least one of the left and right side frame assemblies.

44. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38, wherein each of the left and right frame assemblies comprises a plurality of frame components welded together.

45. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 38, wherein the at least one prime mover is disposed between the left and right seats when viewed in top plan view.

46. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 45, wherein the at least one prime mover is disposed between the left and right seats when also viewed in side elevational view.

47. (New) An off-road vehicle comprising:

a plurality of wheels including at least one front wheel and at least one rear wheel;

a frame supported by the plurality of wheels, the frame comprising at least a left side frame assembly extending in a front to rear direction along a left side of the vehicle, a right side frame assembly extending along the front to rear direction along a right side of the vehicle, a first cross frame member connecting the left and right side frame assemblies;

at least left and right seats supported by the frame;

at least one prime mover disposed between the left and right seats and mounted to the frame such that the left and right frame assemblies extend along left and right sides of the prime mover, the prime mover configured to drive at least one of the plurality of wheels;

wherein the frame further comprises a removable cross frame member configured to be removably secured to the left and right frame assemblies, respectively, the removable cross frame member extending along an upper end of the prime mover and providing additional strength to the frame when secured to the left and right side frame assemblies, respectively.

48. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 47 wherein the first cross frame member extends directly below the prime mover.

Application No.: 10/796,609
Filing Date: March 9, 2004

49. (New) The off-road vehicle as set forth in Claim 47 wherein the first cross frame member is permanently attached to the left and right frame assemblies.